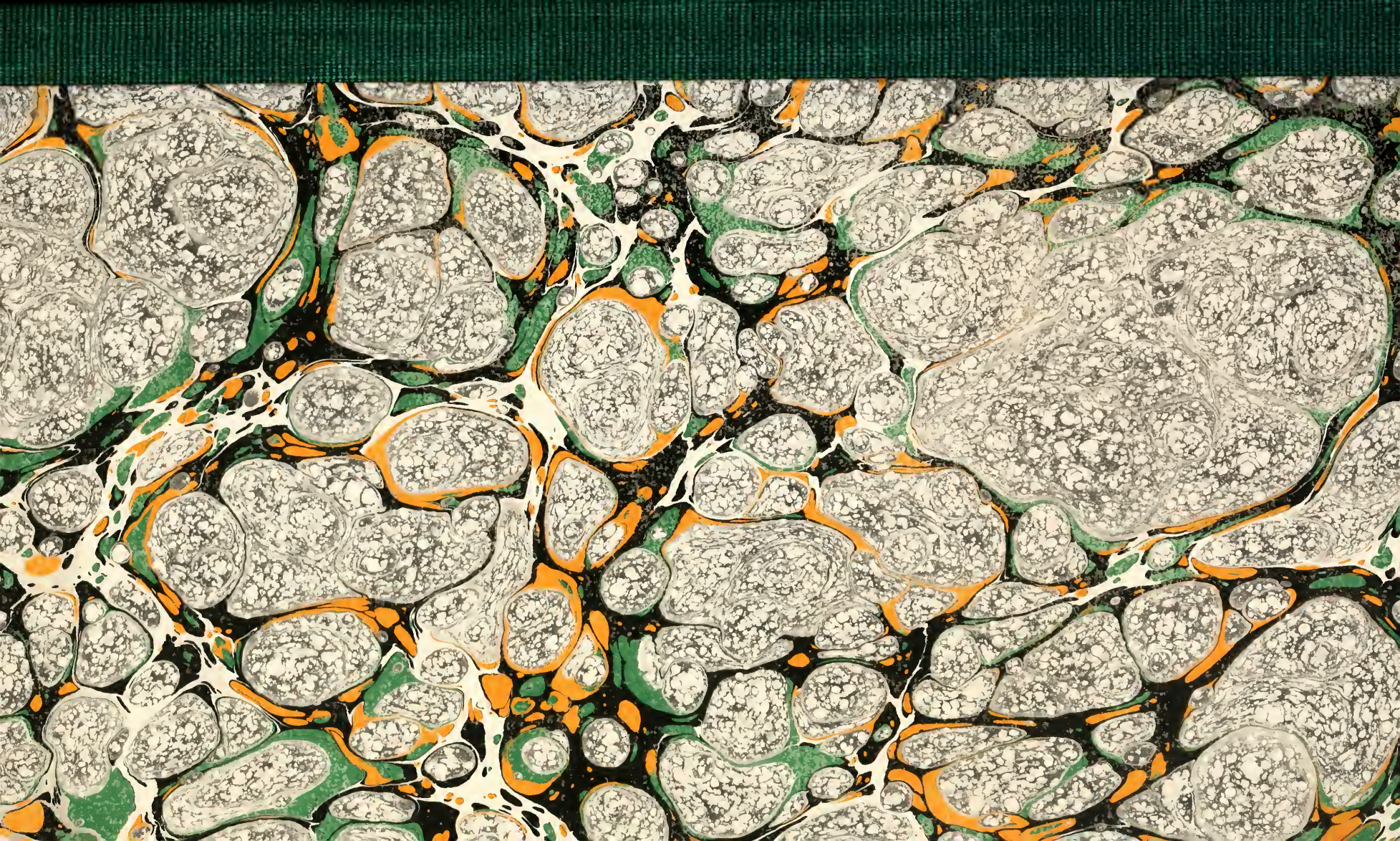

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THE

NATION'S ALTERNATIVE:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN PROVIDENCE HALL,

BEFORE THE

STUDENTS OF JEFFERSON COLLEGE,

August 2d, 1840.

BY

D. H. RIDDLE.

PITTSBURGH:

PRINTED BY A. JAYNES, FRANKLIN HEAD, THIRD STREET.

1840.

Jefferson College, Aug. 3d, 1840.

Rev. D. H. RIDDLE:

Dear Sir,—At a meeting of the students of JEFFERSON COLLEGE, held this day, the undersigned were appointed a committee, to express to you their high gratification in listening to your valuable discourse last night, and to solicit from you a copy for publication.

Your's Respectfully,

J. W. MILLER,
S. F. BOYD,
R. PATTERSON, } *Committee.*

Canonsburgh, Aug. 4th, 1840.

GENTLEMEN:

The object contemplated in the preparation and delivery of the discourse you request for publication, was, to lead young men to adopt right sentiments, and realize their true responsibilities in reference to the permanent prosperity of our beloved country. If that object can be better attained by its wider dissemination, as you kindly suppose, it is at your disposal.

Your's Respectfully,

D. H. RIDDLE.

To Messrs. BOYD, MILLER & PATTERSON.

THE NATION'S ALTERNATIVE.

"The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."—*Isaiah* 60 : 12.

THIS passage contains an important and solemn principle of the Divine administration over the nations of the earth. In common with our fellow-citizens, we gratefully and joyfully recognize and commemorate our independence of all foreign control. But it is true, and we cannot too deeply realize it, that we are dependent on God, as a nation, for the continuance of our national blessings, and, indeed, of our national existence. The Declaration of Independence gives a proper view of our relations towards other nations of the earth, conceived in the wisdom and vindicated by the valor of our fathers, but the Bible gives us the true idea of our relations towards the great King of kings. Whilst, therefore, patriots and politicians have very properly, over the length and breadth of our emancipated and eminently favored country, recently dwelt on the first of these aspects, it is fitting that the ministry on the holy Sabbath should urge from this great book of "the acts and constitutions of God," the solemn and irreversible principles of His government, of which no kingdom or nation can ever become independent.

The sense of the passage is easily understood if we recur to the connexion. The prophet, under the guidance of inspiration, is depicting the millennial glory of the church of God, and is showing how the peculiar treasures and excellencies of every people and climate shall be made to contribute to her glory. The camels of Arabia, the dromedaries of Midian, the gold and incense of Sheba, the flocks of Kedar, the rams of Nebaioth, the ships of Tarshish, the glory of Lebanon, the wealth of the sea, and the forces of the Gentiles, shall all be made to contribute to this result, or tend to make it more illustrious. All the riches of agriculture, all the triumphs of commerce, all the discoveries of science, all the appliances of art, all the facilities of intercommunication, and all the influence of long established and wisely administered governments, amidst all the numerous nations of the earth, are to be made subservient to the glory and growth of the church of God. In connexion with this, stands the truth of the text, that any kingdom or nation, whatever be its particular form of government, or source of wealth, or peculiar excellence, and all kingdoms, however numerous and powerful, that will not come into this arrangement and subserve this great purpose and plan of God, but will either oppose, or impede, or neglect this great result, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The principle of the text is, that nations will be permanent, or perish, as they consent or refuse to serve and glorify God by contributing to the growth of the church and the advancement of religion. No principle can be more appropriate, as a theme of meditation, at this particular period of our nation's history. We invite, therefore, to this subject the

thoughtful consideration of the christian and the patriot, especially the young men of America, and desire to pray the great King of nations that, in this our day, we may know the things that make for our peace and permanence as a nation, before they are hid from our eyes.

In improving this subject we shall endeavor first to show how the principle is illustrated by the history of past nations; second, its application to modern nations, especially our own; with some practical reflections growing out of the whole subject.

First: What an affecting illustration of this principle is derived from the history of the past! What is it but the rise, revolution, and ruin of nations? Properly studied, history is a vast storehouse of wisdom; but viewed, as it is too frequently, without reference to a superintending Providence, and without the light of the great principles furnished by revelation, it must be "a mighty maze, and all without a plan." To the eye of mere curiosity, and to a spirit of atheistic exclusion of the purpose and the providence of God, the past must be a most perplexing enigma; like the mighty ocean to one standing on the shore, where the billows, heaved by some unknown influence, and moved forward by some unknown power, break and die in sullen succession, each for a space arresting attention and then forgotten in the turbulence and noise of its successor. But with the principle of explanation afforded by the text, history becomes pregnant with instruction. We see why nations rose, why they were continued so long, and why they perished. The mystery is explained by their relation to the church of God, as the great visible organ of his administration in this world. When they could serve the church, they were raised up: while they served the church, they lasted: and when they ceased to be necessary or useful in this way, with all their pomp and pageantry, their treasures and trophies, they perished; yea, became utterly desolate. For example, Egypt was raised up to be the asylum of the infant church of God, to preserve them alive in famine, and train them up through terrible discipline for their perilous journeys and their future glory. Tyre, with her ingenious mechanics and boundless treasures, was raised up to be usefully employed in constructing the temple. While thus useful, she flourished; her merchants were princes; her revenues immense. Afterwards she perished; and the fisherman now dries his net on her neglected shores. Babylon was used as a place of captivity and retribution, and kept as the scourge of the erring children of the Most High. While thus useful, she was not swept with the besom of destruction; but when this work was done, the angel cried, "Fallen is great Babylon." Rome, with her mighty empire and splendid improvements, the growth of ages of ambition, was prepared by God to serve the great purpose of the world's evangelization at the birth of Christ. While her highways, and her wide-spread language, and her mighty name, and her gigantic resources, could be made tributary to the cross of Christ, she remained. When this was done, she passed away, "like foam upon the water." The details of this illustration are too immense even for a glance. The thread of explanation furnished by the text, however, will carry the thoughtful mind through the labyrinths of the past, and explain the enigmas of national ruin. It is humiliating to the pride of man, yet it is the simple truth of God, that the political and civil structures of the world have always been merely the scaffoldings of God's interior plans. When their purpose is served, like other scaffoldings they are taken down. When the nations of antiquity would not or did not any longer serve the purposes of their elevation, they perished; yea, when the great God had used them as long as he desired they were utterly destroyed, leaving only their names behind.

There are two ways in which nations may serve the church's interests and the furtherance of religion. First, passively, by being the instruments and executives of God's purposes. Second, actively and intelligently, by complying with his directions. In the first of these ways, ancient nations generally served God's purposes. They were his passive and blind instruments. "They meant not so, neither was it in their hearts." They neither knew nor recognized God, or his purposes, or his church, or his glory. So the Assyrian was the rod of his anger, and having scourged the nations, was thrown away. God used that nation as a man uses an axe—an adapted, but unintelligent instrument of destruction. So another nation was the besom of destruction in the hand of God, and having therewith swept away the rubbish gathered over his creation, he laid it aside, and it rotted. So Cyrus was called of God, by name, centuries before his birth, was conducted by God, though he knew him not, to conquest, to empire, and then to the crowning glory of returning the captivity of the children of Abraham to their native land, and the temple to its former glory.

Of course, in this sense, until God's purposes were completed, the instruments were immortal. Till the rod had scourged, the broom had swept—the conqueror had fulfilled his predestined mission, they were continued, with the appendages essential to the proper execution of their work. They were to serve the church; and the God of the church, and the King of nations, who sees the end from the beginning, preserved them for this purpose, though they neither knew nor acknowledged him. The display of God's glory, and the accomplishment of his purposes, demanded a great variety of means and agencies: hence, the varied nations of antiquity, with their varied histories, were all woven into the web of his providence, and built into the great temple of his praise, ere they perished from the earth.

Second: There is, however, another method of serving the church, and the interests of religion, which applies peculiarly to modern nations. This consists in intelligent service, in fulfilling God's commands and conforming to his purposes. This is a service peculiar to those nations who are made acquainted with the character, government and purposes of God; not a blind service, such as was rendered by pagan nations, mere rods or besoms in his hand, but voluntary obedience to his will and plans, as made known in his word, and made practicable by his providence. The service which God expects from such a nation, and the office he assigns to it, are highly honorable. It is, to use her science to ameliorate the condition of the race; her commercial advantages, to convey civilization, and its attendant blessings, wherever the winds carry her merchandize; her wealth, to establish the institutions and extend the power of the Gospel; her power over other nations, to recommend and make universal those principles of christianity to which, under God, she owes all her distinction and glory. This is the high and honorable mission of christian nations; to "beautify the house of his glory," and make his praise universal.

The principle of the text, in its application to such nations, is plain and solemn. The nation that will gladly and honorably fulfil this mission, and contribute her share to the perpetuity and extension of true religion, and give her influence and example to the evangelization of the earth, and stand forth the advocate and supporter of God's government, and the channel of God's blessings, will be preserved by his power and providence, whatever be its other peculiarities; but on the contrary, any nation that will refuse this service, when offered and understood; will selfishly or atheistically violate the confidence of God and abuse his goodness; will exert her influence and lend the weight of her example to impede or oppose the progress of God's

kingdom; will pervert her science, and wealth, and commerce, and influence, designed to be blessings, into so many organs and auxiliaries of baleful and blighting curses; that nation, however wealthy, and prosperous, and honored, and happy, and apparently secure; though marked by an unparalleled course of advancement, and blest with the best of constitutions and forms of government, and guided by the profoundest statesmen, and gilded by the brightest talents, will "perish;" yea, shall be "utterly wasted." The King of nations who originally ordained this great principle of his administration, and has exemplified it in his past dealings with the world, has recorded it in his word, and holds it up, by his ambassadors, for the instruction and warning of nations to the end of time.

It is obvious that the present christian nations of the earth are practically and deeply interested in the principle of the text. God expects from them this intelligent and voluntary service, and in default thereof, threatens them with perdition, after the example of past ages. The nations that hold the christian religion as their national faith, are, or might be, sufficiently acquainted with God's plans and purposes, as revealed in the scriptures, to make them capable of rendering him intelligent service. They know the blessed and beneficial influences of christianity on the civil and temporal interests of mankind; that it is the only efficient element and agent of the amelioration of human society; that it is the foundation of political excellence, the sweetener and safeguard of domestic happiness, as well as the only sure guide to individual and eternal blessedness. They know, too, that the grand purpose of God, and the great dispensation of time, is to make the Gospel, in all these respects, universal, and bring the whole habitable globe thereby into one blessed brotherhood. These nations, as they know the service they owe to God, why God has given them wealth and prosperity, and how he expects them to be employed, should also know and feel the responsibility and alternative it imposes and implies. The men of God should never fail to tell them at proper times, if they forget it, that their preservation or perdition depends on cheerfully doing, or wilfully refusing to do, this service to God and his church.

But there are special reasons why the principle of the text is applicable to our nation, or why our permanency or perdition as a nation is involved in the position we assume, and the influence we exert, in regard to the interests of religion. A consideration of these will make the nation's alternative more apparent, and the view of our responsibilities more striking.

1st. *This nation was founded on the principles of christianity and by men who understood and acknowledged their responsibilities in this respect.* The Puritans were men who learned by fiery trials the excellence of religion and the value of religious liberty. They were men who had studied profoundly, in an age of peculiar agitation, the principles of God's administration over men and nations, and the purposes and methods of his mercy toward our fallen race. They left their country for conscience sake. As they covenanted with God and each other on board the Mayflower, and as they landed on the rock of Plymouth, they avowed that their highest motive in seeking their new residence, and their highest honor in founding a new Empire, was, to make this new world not only the asylum of religious freedom, but the instrumentality for the more rapid and glorious diffusion of God's truth, and the blessings of liberty and religion, as secured in the everlasting Gospel, throughout the whole earth. Every collateral consideration, in their view, faded before this. They valued, and meant to secure and maintain, liberty of conscience, and free institutions, and literary establishments, and commercial greatness; but all these in subservience to the preservation and propagation of true religion. 'Twas this that made this boundless continent,

where the vassalage of the old world had never penetrated, and where they meant it never should, so immeasurably important. On these principles they laid the foundations of this nation. Over these prospects they fervently and frequently prayed. These high responsibilities they bequeathed to their children; and it was by men who caught this spirit, and were animated by these prospects, that the conception of independence was originated, and its consummation achieved. It was because this young nation was intolerably impeded by foreign enactions, and annoying interference, in the high career of accomplishing these purposes; and because a state of continued dependence on the old country threatened to paralyze and prevent her noble efforts and aspirations in this respect, that the sons of the Puritans felt at length that revolution was a duty. It was this that armed religious men with carnal weapons, to work out the sublime positions embodied in the Declaration of Independence, and the great results aimed at in the revolution. 'Twas this that brought out volumes of prayer from christian altars during the struggle. 'Twas this especially animated the spirit of the immortal commander, whose confidence in God, unfailing amidst all storms and clouds, was the encouraging exemplar of so many hearts and hopes in the perils of that period. With any other spirit or prospects, we hesitate not to say, the difficulties and perils of the revolution would have been insurmountable. It was because God was to be served, and religion's interests secured, and a vantage ground for influence universal as the globe was to be gained by success, or lost for centuries by failure, that so much sublimity was mingled with the contest between the mother and the daughter, and its successful issue made such an epoch in the history of human civilization and salvation! It was, in an emphatic sense, "*a fight of faith.*" And if this nation now, when she can look back and comprehend the very animating principle of successful revolution, will refuse to serve the interests of religion, which brought the Puritans across the deep—if she will cast off the fear of God, and flout at the faith of her Fathers, acknowledged by frequent days of fasting and thanksgiving in the days of her peril—if she will use her wealth, and power, and national influence, and example, to impede or oppose the kingdom of God, will she prosper? will she be permanent? Or will she not "perish?" perish, though raised to so proud an eminence; perish, though privileged beyond all other nations; yea, "be utterly wasted" in an overthrow as mighty as her antecedent elevation was unparalleled?

2d. *God and religion have done more for this nation than any other on the face of the earth.* We are the freest, fairest, and happiest of all lands. This is not said in the way of invidious boasting, but as the sober truth, which every heart that hears it spoken is ready to endorse, and which has recently been echoed from ten thousand lips, and in ten thousand ways, from Penobscot to the Pacific. In the language of a noble ode,—

"Say, should we search the globe around,
Where can such happiness be found
As dwells in this much favored land?
Here Plenty reigns; here Freedom sheds
Her choicest blessings on our heads!
Here Commerce spreads her ample store,
Which comes from every foreign shore;
Science and Art their charms display;
Religion teaches us to raise
Our voices in our Maker's praise,
As truth and conscience point the way.
The extended shade, the fruitful skies—
The raptures liberty bestows,
The eternal joys the Gospel shows."

All this, notwithstanding occasional difficulties and unfortunate suspensions, we may still apply to our country. And whence has it sprung? Can any—will any—deny that it has come from God and religion? Is it not the Bible, and the influence of the Gospel, and the providence of God, which make us what we are? Was it not, indeed, the strong infusion of religious principle, and the power of truth, that made our revolution different in its termination from that of beautiful but unhappy France? Was it not the power of religious principle that kept us from dismemberment at the adoption of the Federal Constitution, during the gloomiest period of the last war, and at other crises of our history? What but this keeps us back from anarchy now? Suppose atheism and irreligion were as popular and prevalent as their advocates would wish to make them: suppose the power of an enlightened and spiritual ministry were crushed as they desire: suppose the Sabbath were blotted out and exploded—the Sanctuary shut up and silenced over our land, and all the connected influence of christianity were gone! What would keep us from anarchy, and how long would we be saved from national perdition?

If, therefore, this nation, owing so much to God and religion, founded on faith and preserved from ruin by the indirect influences of religion, will not serve God and help to swell the tide of influence which promises to bless all nations, but will selfishly consult her pride, and sacrilegiously trample on the Sabbath, shrink away from God and brave his vengeance; again, and with unfeigned earnestness, we ask, will she be permanent? Can she be prosperous? Must she not perish? We see no other possible result, if the principle of the text, recorded in the volume of inspiration, and illustrated by the uniform course of Providence for so many centuries, continues to guide the dispensations of the King of kings!

3d. *In the power of her example this nation is pre-eminent among the nations of the earth.* The statement and illustration of this truth will not provoke improper pride if it is connected, as it ought to be in every well-balanced mind, with the feeling of responsibility for its proper exertion. The fact, we presume, will not be questioned, at least by Americans; and even other nations, though reluctantly, are beginning to admit it. England, our only rival in the world's affections in this respect, may be more feared, but we are more loved, by the nations of the earth, especially the partially civilized, or pagan. Her ambition is pushing wider her conquests every year, and shaking her rod of empire over a larger terrritory. Her cannon may now be battering down the walls of Canton, and thus opening her opium preceded way into the Celestial Empire. But force never wins affection. They dread her power; they tremble before her arms; but they admire our character, and venerate our institutions, and welcome our representatives. In Turkey, in China, in different parts of Africa, in the isles of the sea, the American name is fraught with amazing power, and thrills with strange emotions on hearts only half waked from barbarism. What we sanction or reprobate will, therefore, to a great extent be sanctioned or reprobated by all these people. It is said that there are some stars in the system of the universe whose light since creation has been travelling to our world, and yet has never reached it, or is just now reaching it. So the light of American institutions, and the fragrance of the American name, though travelling from the revolution, has not yet penetrated some of the dark and distant places of the earth; but as soon as it does, it awakens at once the same noble feelings. Witness the recent development of interest and enthusiasm by the Imaum of Muscat, whose ship is now in one of our ports, and whose present has so perplexed the constitutional statesmen of Congress.

But how tremendous the responsibility involved in this fact, and how aggravated the crime, and how terrible the punishment, if the power of this example and influence is not exerted for the spiritual good of the nations of the earth and the interests of religion! Why has this pre-eminence been granted to this nation? Why has young America already outstript her older rivals in the affections and admiration of the world? Is it that we may exult in the proud consciousness of this superiority? Is it that we may lead the nations of the earth, by the power of our example, in the pathway of profligacy, corruption, atheism and anarchy, and then, perdition—after teaching them the raptures and sweets of liberty? Oh, no! This would be perverting the gifts of Heaven. It is that we might thus more effectually, more extensively, more illustriously serve God and the interests of religion, and be nobler benefactors of our race. And if we do not honestly undertake this dispensation, committed to us by the providence of God and the King of nations, shall we long prosper, or will our character and capital of moral influence be permanent? If we turn aside from these glorious objects to party wrangling, to schemes of pride, or projects of ambition, and thus live unto ourselves, while the world is looking to us for help, may not our good name, and the power of our example, and our opportunity of illimitable usefulness, if not our very national existence and free institutions, perish? If perversely blind to our high calling and noble destiny, and wickedly unwilling to devote the energies and influence which his goodness has bestowed, to the promotion of his glory, may not our nation, the idol of our affections, and cynosure of all lands, be left to add another exemplification to future ages of the solemn and unchangeable principle of the text? This is a question and a subject well worthy of consideration by the wisest among us. It should be studied especially in connexion with the deterioration of moral principle which, to some extent, has come to characterize us latterly as a nation. If a sagacious and reflecting Frenchman, (Mons. De Tocqville,) on mere political grounds, and the analogies of the past, discusses the question of the perpetuity of our institutions and nation, surely the believer in revelation, with such a principle before him as the text furnishes, cannot help pondering the deeply interesting and painful alternative of national permanency or perdition. We have no desire or intention to awaken forebodings of unreal evil, or indulge or occasion useless apprehensions. On the contrary, our predominating feeling for some time past has been that of hope in regard to our country; hope, the child of faith rather than of sight, resting on a view of God's purposes rather than our country's present aspects. Still, the dangers of our high and glorious career as a nation ought occasionally to be held forth to the reflecting. We may "perish; yea, be utterly wasted." There is a path that inevitably leads in that direction and ends in that result. Who shall point out the peculiarities of that path, if not the ministers of the sanctuary? And to whom, if not to the young men of our country? And when, if not when we have been recently called to commemorate our independence and our glory?

But there is also a path of national prosperity and permanency. If we as a nation serve God and the interests of religion, we shall be saved. If our wealth, pouring upon us from every quarter; our commerce whitening every breeze; our science, our art, our all, be consecrated to this great object, then we shall have "glory, and honor, and immortality." "God, even our God, shall save us, and all lands shall bless us." We shall not "perish," nor "be utterly wasted." But having more effectually served to usher in the final triumphs of the church than any other nation, we shall sound loudest and sweetest in the hallelujahs of a regenerated and emancipated globe!

Our first reflection in view of this subject is, the folly of expecting the necessary perpetuity of our country. There is a feeling of perpetuity, (we cannot call it any thing better,) in regard to our country, existing in many minds, and exceedingly congenial to all. This feeling is sometimes so strong as to resist all argument, analogy, or apprehension: but it is childish and unphilosophical, not so say unchristian. It is contrary to correct historical deduction, as well as the plain sentiment of the text, and the whole tenor of revelation. If men will not learn from the word of God the fallacy of this feeling, they ought from comprehensive views of universal history. It is just sixty-four years since the Declaration of Independence—little more than fifty since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, the true epoch of our national birth. Half a century! What is this, compared with the age of some ancient empires which flourished and fell because they would not subserve the glory of God! Think of Egypt, and her ages of empire, yet now "the basest of kingdoms," according to the word of the Lord! Who that has knelt amidst the ruins of Thebes would come back to America and speak of perpetuity? Think of Babylon and her cycles of glory, and go and listen to the booming cry of the bat amidst her ruined palaces, and then try to speak of perpetuity! Think of Rome and her widening grandeur for so many generations, and of her decline and fall, and gaze on her now as she stands "the Niobe of nations," and speak of perpetuity! The idea of fixedness, right or wrong, seemed natural to these nations after ten times the duration of our's; but for a philosopher, in view of the fate of these nations, as given in history, to cherish the feeling, at our age, is foolish; and for a christian, in view of the text and its illustrations, to do so, is hardly less than impious.

> "We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
> Die too! The deep foundations that we lay,
> Time ploughs them up and not a trace remains!
> We build with what we deem eternal rock;
> A distant age asks where the fabric stood,
> And in the dust, sifted and searched in vain,
> The undiscoverable secret sleeps!"

2d. In view of this subject we remark, the best practical christian is the truest patriot. A nation is only the aggregate of its individual citizens: the character and influence of each go to make up the character and influence of the nation. The true way for any nation, and for this nation especially, to be brought to serve God and the interests of religion, and thus to be saved from perishing, is, that the individuals that compose it should be induced, in increasing numbers, and with intenser zeal, and more untiring aggressiveness of influence, to engage in this service. We do not mean by any thing we have heretofore said to convey the idea that governments, as such, should engage in the work of spreading the Gospel, or enter into a crusade to carry free institutions by force of arms to the enslaved millions of our race. All that religion needs from government is to be let alone, unimpeded and unshackled, to work its own way: it only asks that no laws should be enacted, and no influence exerted, which will sanction or embolden sin, or dishearten, or, above all, disfranchise christian men, while obeying conscience. Thus much she has a right to expect from government. But, after all, the service for God and religion is to be rendered by individuals. Virtue is not a thing of state machinery, but must exist in and go forth from the mass of the people. When these are bringing their talents and influence into the right channel, then, on the principle of the text, the nation will be preserved. Any

one can see, in this light, that he is doing most for the permanency and prosperity of his country—or, in other words, is the best patriot who is the best christian; who does most to bring his fellow-men and fellow-citizens under the practical sway of religion; who diffuses most extensively around him the conservative principles of piety towards God and righteousness and benevolence towards man; who is ever exerting the silent and unobtrusive, but powerful influence of prayer, and a pious example; whose heart ever vibrates in sympathy for the miseries of a fallen race, and whose hand and purse are ever open to assist any prudent and practicable scheme for their amelioration. Such a man does more for his country than the noisiest infidel politician, or, probably, the most eloquent prayerless statesman. He does not curse one administration as the cause of all our troubles, or expect a paradise from the introduction of another. He may look deeper for our disease than a disordered currency, and elsewhere for a cure than party prescriptions. He may see and mourn over the corruption and intrigues, and low machinery, and addresses to the lowest and fiercest passions of the human heart, employed equally by either side, yet all the while he may be doing more than any partisan can do in softening the asperities and elevating the principles of all. Christian men, especially christian ministers, in the language of political economy, are "non-producers," an incubus on the state, receiving benefits and rendering none: but this is all wrong.

> "Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,
> And censured oft as useless! Stillest streams
> Oft water fairest meadows; and the bird
> That flutters least, is longest on the wing."

My young friends, the pulpit does not yield to the platform in the love of country. We advocate patriotism of the right kind, not that which is turbulent and ostentatious, but that which God approves, which will tell on the real interests, and true glory and permanent prosperity of our land; a patriotism which, taking its stand on the immutable principles of revelation, as postulates in politics as well as religion, will by serving God and advancing piety, tend most certainly to keep the nation from perishing, and all her institutions from being utterly wasted. Such patriots—would to God all in our country were! Such patriots, the Gospel makes. Such patriots, true christians are the world over. Such men are the salt of a land; the Abrahams that move Heaven's compassions for a sinning people; the righteous, for whose sake the guilty Sodoms of earth are spared.

> "Perhaps the self-approving, haughty World,
> That, as she sweeps him with her whistling silks,
> Scarce deigns to notice him; or, if she sees,
> Deems him a cipher in the works of God,
> Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
> Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
> Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
> And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
> When, Isaac like, the solitary saint
> Walks forth to meditate at even-tide,
> And think on her, who thinks not for herself!"

3d. We remark again, in the light of this subject, how kind and wise that Providence which has recently afflicted our country in her pecuniary and commercial interests! God said to an ancient church, "As many as I love, I chasten and rebuke." So, doubtless, he may say to nations. And if ever chastisement was needed by any country, it was needed by our's. If ever a

nation would have been cursed by being left to herself, we were that nation! Now that the time of sober reflection, one of the first results of sanctified affliction, has come, let us ask ourselves,—Were we serving God and the interests of religion in that wide-spread fever of speculation and aggrandizement which ran over our land a few years ago, shaking and unsettling the soundest minds in the land, and completely deranging the weak and the worthless? Or, were we serving ourselves, and trying to glorify one another? None will hesitate now to say, some penitently and sorrowfully, and all sincerely, that we were serving ourselves, and in our hot pursuit of wealth were forgetting, as a nation and church, God and eternity as fast as possible! Was it not, therefore, on the principle of the text, the high and rapid road to ruin? Were we not tugging at the anchor that binds us to the throne? If left unchecked and unchastised, given up to the vagaries of our national intoxication until now, what and where had we been? Periled, must we not reply, to the very utmost, if not actually perished, in pride, prosperity, and forgetfulness of God! The check, the crash, the connected troubles, were painful and humiliating; for, nationally or individually, "no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous." But who will not say they were necessary, medicinal, merciful?

Since that period the hopes of the pious, in reference to our country, have greatly revived: they feel that God does not design to give us up without discipline to perish, as other nations have perished: they mark in these troubles an evident tendency, and they trust a gracious purpose of God to call off the minds of his people from confidence in wrong objects, and to beget in the nation the conviction of a higher career of national glory than the mere acquisition of wealth. This impression, we speak it gratefully, has already to some extent been made on the hearts of the reflecting and prayerful among God's people. The ministers of religion, many of whom were "carried away from their steadfastness by the error of the wicked" in the world, and the worldly in the church, have been inducted into new views of God's administration, and the best means of carrying forward his kingdom. Even political men are beginning, under the influence of these recurring pressures, to pause and ponder; and though unfortunately the full impression of the truth in their case is counteracted by an everlasting recurrence to secondary causes and political agencies, yet it is to be hoped, after the fever of party politics has cooled, that a wiser and sounder public sentiment will be found to have been created in this whole nation. All this, as arranged and brought about of God, is exceedingly kind and encouraging. Many, in the high tide of antecedent and illusive prosperity with which the nation was intoxicated, were sick, nigh unto death, with despondency. They remembered Sodom, and were sad. Their voice could not be heard amidst the din of ever-driving business, and the stupefaction it occasioned. Their illustrations from the past were considered the abstractions of visionaries and recluses. They tried in vain by Sabbath anodynes to calm the fever that rioted even in christian men's hearts through the week. They "were unto them as one that spake parables." But now God's providence has accomplished the work. The plethora of the body politic has been mitigated. The ear of the people has been gained amidst the comparative suspension of business, and they now will generally grant that the formerly neglected counsels of God's servants were founded not on their own fancies, but on the immutable principles of truth revealed in the scriptures, and recorded for men's instruction and admonition in every age.

If, on the principle of the text, this nation, on the road to ruin, has been checked and made to reflect; if the thirst for wealth has been to some extent

destroyed; if the fondness for speculation, and the folly of imitating the extravagancies of older nations, have been rebuked; and if these things have turned the nation's ear to the voice of God speaking in the wilderness, we may and ought to view the embarrassments of our country as the greatest of her blessings; and amidst all our other grounds of thanksgiving we should not fail to praise God for chastising our pride, and checking our delusive and dangerous, if not destructive prosperity!

4th. As intimately connected with the last topic, we remark, that the revivals of religion which have been recently and extensively enjoyed in our country are exceedingly encouraging in view of the principle of the text. Revivals of religion bring into the kingdom of God unusual numbers in short periods. They make christians of worldlings; they make selfish men benevolent, proud men humble, covetous men liberal, contracted men expansive,—in a word, men who have lived unto themselves in various ways, begin to live unto God, bringing their gold and silver, and talents and influence with them, to beautify the house of his glory. Such scenes, with such effects, have been enjoyed in many parts of our country since the beginning of this year. And it is worthy of special notice, in this connexion, that they have had most influence in the large cities of our land, the sources and centres of public sentiment. They have also, in many instances, taken hold of the best talents of our country and consecrated them to the use of God's church. They have embraced also a large portion of the wealth and business of the land, and baptized it with "holiness unto the Lord." And they have in most places taken hold of the youth, and brought the strength and energy of the rising manhood of the land into the ranks of the professedly pious.

All these circumstances are encouraging, on the great question of the nation's alternative: they are so many omens of promise, and pledges of hope, that the nation will come to serve God, and thereby be saved from perishing. By bringing this rich tide of mercy over our land, after the chastisements he has inflicted, God seems to place his bow of covenant-mercy in the clouds of our calamity. In pure and increasing revivals of religion, the salvation of the nation, under God, is treasured. If the talents and wealth brought into the church are faithfully (as they have been professedly) devoted to the advancement of religion; if recent revivals are made, as they ought to be, arguments with God for yet more glorious displays of his power; if christians will "go forward," as they are encouraged to do, by his blessing, with a steadfast reliance on God and on the use of all appropriate means, resolved to labor and pray till our whole population is brought under the influence of the Gospel, and all our institutions are baptized with the spirit of religion;—then indeed we are safe! And why not? The first fruits are gathered—and why not the harvest? With such a population as revivals would make, if universal, we shall not perish. Such a nation would be fitted and disposed to carry forth with speedy steps the blessings of salvation,

> "Till earth's remotest nation
> Has learned Messiah's name!"

She would inscribe on all her wealth, and have floating on her flags,—

> "Waft, waft, ye winds, his story,
> And you, ye waters, roll,
> Till, like a sea of glory,
> It spreads from pole to pole!"

Oh, my country! is not this to be thy high and blessed dispensation in future time! And, merciful Father, is not this the meaning of thy blessings poured so richly of late over this land!

5th. We remark again, in view of this principle, how great, and yet how little realized, the responsibility of those who guide public sentiment in this great nation! Such persons, to a great extent, if our previous remarks be true, are responsible for the permanency or perdition of this nation: yet how seldom do they properly appreciate their position, or act under an abiding sense of their responsibility! Do political leaders and editors of newspapers, for example, properly understand and appreciate their tremendous responsibility? If they did, would they create and diffuse through the circle of their influence, such entirely exaggerated views of the importance of mere political contests? Would they add to the existing feverishness of the body politic by such inflammatory appeals as often fill their speeches and their paragraphs? Could they convey, even by implication, the idea that as this or that party succeeds, this or that political measure is adopted, the country is saved, or perishes? Such men ought to understand that the means they use to produce a particular, and it may be a very important result, are deeply perverting the proper sentiments of the nation and turning them off from the true source of national permanency declared in the word of God! They should know that it is a great sin against God,

"To give up to party what was meant for mankind!"

Do members of Congress duly weigh this responsibility? If they did, would they not more carefully watch their conduct on the great arena, where the eyes of the nation are fixed, and guard against those scenes which have recently disgraced the halls of legislation? Such scenes are sending forth over the length and breadth of the land a most pernicious and blighting influence. Every month the foundation-principles of our country's prosperity are loosening under such displays. Can we be astonished at murders and assassinations in low places, when we see such vituperative language and Vandal brawls in "high places!" or wonder at the fever that reigns rampant through the body, when such fire is raging at the heart? Can we wonder at defalcation in the lower officers when we see such deterioration of moral principle among the legislators? Such men should pause and reflect on the responsibilities that gather around their station, and the weighty issues of their influence on the grand experiment of self-government! They would do well calmly to review the events preceding the downfall of the Roman republic, and the establishment of the reign of the emperors, and soon after of corruption and anarchy. They should mark the analogies they are now enacting before the world, thus becoming the jest of older nations, and the grief of the thoughtful in our own. They ought to remember, and tremble when they remember, that the disorders that have always preceded and hastened the perdition of republics have been the confusion and party excesses of legislative bodies.

In these circumstances ministers of the Gospel, under a sense of their responsibility, must exert all their power to counteract wrong influences, and shape the sentiments of the nation aright. Persuaded that the true foundations of national happiness and permanency, as well as of individual salvation, are laid down in the unerring volume of inspiration; satisfied that the great and unchanging principles of the Divine administration are there recorded, they must seize all fitting occasions to redeem these truths from forgetfulness, and press them upon a thoughtless age and a God-neglecting generation. The ministry, as the commissioned expounders of the government of God, must fearlessly and frequently say, "Be wise now, O ye kings; and be instructed, ye judges of the earth! Serve the Lord with fear, and

rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his anger is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

And the sentiments of the pulpit, deduced from the word of God and illustrated by his providence, should be endorsed by all christians, and circulated through the community till the nation is brought to feel aright on this subject. Let no man say he has no influence, and therefore no responsibility. Every man can say what he thinks; and every christian must think and believe, and therefore may say kindly and affectionately, "The nation that will not serve" the interests of religion must "perish;" yea, will be certainly and "utterly wasted." If all christians would testify this by their language and their lives perpetually, the nation's alternative would not long be doubtful.

Lastly.—What an appeal this subject makes to the young men of our nation! On them, after all, to a great extent, depends the question of the nation's preservation or perdition! If the young men of America, especially educated young men, will come up, as with the heart of one man, to the service of God and religion; if they will consecrate their affections and energies to the service and glory of the Redeemer in spreading his truth and kingdom throughout the earth, the nation is saved. If not, it may "perish!" What a solemn—yea, terrific alternative! Who can reflect on it without emotion? Could I lift up my voice like a trumpet and speak to every young man in this mighty nation, I would say, Come to the rescue, not of a party, but of a beloved and most deeply imperiled country! Save this land from perishing, and with it the hopes of our race for a long period! Throw yourself into the holy war, which has such stirring incentives and such sublime results! Come, serve God, and thus save your country! Swell the strength of conservative power held by this land in trust for the world!

True, this subject speaks to all, but especially to "young men, because they are strong." They will soon be the guides of public sentiment in this vast republic, and soon stamp on this nation their "image and superscription," either of consecration to God and religion, or to gain, pride and ambition. Young men, shall this appeal be listened to, or disregarded? Shall the calls of ambition, the allurements of wealth, the claims of business, or the songs of pleasure, shut your ears to this strong cry of your God, your country and your race? Is there any honor or ambition to be compared with the honor of saving *such a country* from perishing? Is there any pleasure equal to the pleasure of preserving such a light, unfading and fair, to beam with blessed lustre on unborn millions? Could the wealth of Crœsus buy such a privilege as the good providence of God gives to you of deciding such a nation's alternative of permanency or perdition? If you feel any stirrings within you of this sacred ambition to be benefactors of your race; if you feel any attractions towards such pleasures; if such glory thrills in your bosoms, let me entreat you to come at once and declare your independence of all the fashions, and follies, and sins, that would keep your heart and life from this service. Give up, for God's sake and your country's sake, a life of self-gratification and self-aggrandizement. For such "a hope set before you, endure the cross and despise the shame." To secure such glorious results, live a life of self-denial; live by faith; live like Christ, animated by the presence of the Invisible, and the hopes of the future, and the joys of the Eternal. Throw in your influence for life with God's people. Study,—accumulate mental treasures,—polish your weapons,—perfect your powers,—all with a view of achieving your country's salvation and the glory of God, as therewith indissolubly intertwined!

The alternative is before you. If you will not, then, after a life of comparative uselessness, you will soon perish from the memory of man; for "the memory of the wicked shall rot;" and afterwards you "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." But if you will, as God grant you may, then, having done your age some service, and rendered to God some feeble return for his goodness, and some wise improvement of your talents, and having been educated for glory by the life and labor of faith, you shall be fitted to go up and serve God, and enjoy the friendship of angels and of all the holy and happy spirits of earth, amidst the sun-light of a happier economy, for ever and ever! AMEN.

Riddle The Nations Alternative....
1840.

Received: The book had worn, acid paper covers that were loose at the spine

Riddle The Nations Alternative....
1840.

Received: The book had worn protective covering sheets- no cover.

Proceedure: The book was guarded into signatures and sewn. Adhesive used at the spine is a 50/50 mix of jade 403 and methyl cellulose. Paste was used for guarding.

O. P.-C. 1983